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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1109
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5304
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 8088
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 4045
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0178
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2052
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 006170

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/17/2017
TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [TH](#)
SUBJECT: LEADER OF ANTI-THAKSIN CAMP EQUALLY SCATHING ABOUT
COUPMAKERS AS ELECTION APPROACHES

REF: A. BANGKOK 6069

[1](#)B. BANGKOK 6159

Classified By: Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. In a December 14 meeting with the Ambassador, staunch anti-Thaksin NLA member Prasong Soonsiri said that the Thai election will likely result in a dilemma for the military because the pro-Thaksin PPP party will be in position to form the next government. On the other hand, if PPP were frozen out of government despite getting the most votes, its supporters might create trouble. Prasong criticized PM Surayud and Deputy PM Sonthi for ineffectively navigating Thailand through the post-coup environment. He indicated that Sonthi had likely thrown some support to the Motherland Party, and had planned to skim defense procurement funds to do so. End Summary.

ELECTION TO LEAD TO QUAGMIRE

[1](#)2. (C) In a December 14 meeting, National Legislative Assembly member and strident anti-Thaksin agitator Prasong Soonsiri told the Ambassador that there would be no viable outcome to the December 23 election. If the People's Power Party (PPP) won a plurality, as predicted by polls, but was unable to form a government due to other parties banding together, PPP supporters would cause unrest, Prasong said. Conversely, the military would have a difficult time accepting a PPP government if the party succeeded in forming the next government.

[1](#)3. (C) Prasong severely criticized the post-coup actions of Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont and Deputy Prime Minister Sonthi Boonyaratglin. Sonthi knew how to overthrow a government, but had not demonstrated any sense of the necessary actions to follow up, Prasong said. Sonthi should have made a concerted effort to explain the grounds for the coup in order to convince Thais of the rationale for his actions. As for Surayud, Prasong said the PM should have more earnestly investigated corruption committed by Thaksin. In addition, the RTG's efforts on laws such as the Foreign Business Act (FBA), the Internal Security Act (ISA) and compulsory licensing were misguided, Prasong said. Finally, with the Thai general election approaching, Sonthi and Surayud should have been much more aggressive in persuading

Thais of the need to elect non-PPP candidates.

MATCHIMA LEADER NO POLITICIAN

14. (C) The Ambassador raised the plight of Matchima Thippathai Party leader Prachai Leophairatana whose recent legal troubles had compounded his troubles on entry into politics (Ref A). Prasong said controversies within the Matchima party illustrated that Prachai had no political skills. Prachai's failed attempt to purchase his way into political power provided a striking contrast to Thaksin, a businessman who had successfully entered the political arena. Prachai had played a useful role at the beginning of the anti-Thaksin movement, but after his legal difficulties, he was now an insignificant player in the anti-Thaksin movement, Prasong said.

SONTHI BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE MOTHERLAND PARTY?

15. (C) The Ambassador asked Prasong for his assessment of who had financially supported the Motherland Party. (Note: Many contacts have indicated that the Motherland Party received support from someone with ties to the military. End note.) Prasong said that several months ago Sonthi had come to him and said that he was considering supporting Kajit Habananda's Rak Chat Party. Sonthi determined that he would need about 2 billion baht (usd 60 million) to build the party up. The Royal Thai Army then negotiated the purchase of armored personnel carriers (APC) from Ukraine, with the deal designed to allow Sonthi to skim 2 billion baht of the inflated 4 billion baht pricetag. The One-Two-Go plane crash in Phuket on September 16, 2007, had changed these calculations,

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however, because Kajit was CEO of the airline. Prasong admitted that he had no evidence, but he believed that it was likely Sonthi had decided to support the Motherland Party instead. (Note: According to our sources, this APC sale was put on hold by the Defense minister, to be decided by the new government. This does not then appear to be the source of Motherland's unexpectedly large war chest. End note).

THAKSIN VCD BRILLIANT, ILLEGAL

16. (C) The Ambassador also raised the recent distribution of a video compact disc in which Thaksin addressed the political environment in Thailand (Ref B.) Prasong said disc was illegal but a brilliant political ploy. Thaksin had highlighted a painful truth; that the current government was unable to address the hardships faced by Thai people. This reality underscored Prasong's belief that the current government should not meddle with laws such as the FBA or the ISA, rather it should focus on the preparing the Thai public for the election.

COMMENT

17. (C) Like many of those who initially supported the coup, Prasong is now disillusioned with Sonthi and Surayud. We are inclined to share his concerns about the post-election period: whoever wins is going to face very serious challenges in dealing with the losers.

BOYCE